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VENEZUELA TASK FORCE

2330 EDT Saturday, April 13, 2002

CHAVISTAS SEIZE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AND MEDIA OUTLETS

(C) Chávez's Vice President Diosdado Cabello declared himself Acting President and called Chávez supporters to the palace. Chavistas, supported by the palace's Honor Regiment, seized the palace. Questioning whether Chávez had resigned, the regiment's commander insisted Chávez be brought to the palace. Meanwhile, Chavistas assaulted and occupied all but one television station. Faced with pro-Chávez mobs, Caracas dailies *El Universal* and *El Nacional* were evacuated. Chavistas are demanding Chávez's return. There are reports that Chavez is on his way back to Caracas to re-take power.

(TF/Embassy Caracas telcon, TF/Venezuela desk telcon, Reuters)

OAS RESOLUTION APPROVED, SECGEN MISSION TO CARACAS

(U) Late April 12, OAS Permanent Council approved a resolution condemning alteration of constitutional order and deplorable acts of violence, calling for normalization of democratic rule, and instructing the OAS Secretary General to travel to Caracas as soon as possible. A special General Assembly has been convoked for April 18. *(TF/USOAS)*

PROVISIONAL PRESIDENT CARMONA DETAINED

(S) Chávez's supporters seized control of Forte Tiuna, the Defense Ministry headquarters, and detained Provisional President Carmona and Carmona-loyal military leaders. Earlier, Carmona tried to reverse course and reinstate the National Assembly in the face of widespread domestic and international criticism. Carmona's action followed a broadcast by Military Commander General Efraín Vásquez, in which Vásquez outlined a seven-point plan to maintain constitutional continuity including reinstatement.

(TF/Embassy Caracas telcon, TF/Venezuela desk telcon, Globovisión)

AMERICAN CITIZENS OK

(U) There are no reports of AMcit injuries. Most US carriers have suspended flights. Caracas airport was reportedly closed. *(TF/Embassy Caracas telcon)*

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